

Dragonshards

The Draconic Prophecy

By Keith Baker



The scrying pool was a mirror of the sky, and the glittering Ring of Siberys stretched across its surface. Tielanthraxa whispered and the image grew, moving closer and closer until she could see the individual stones that made up a particular section of the ring. The shards were silhouetted against the lunar sphere of Rhaan, and the image was unmistakable: Khyber's Claw, surrounded by the light of the crimson moon.

The dragon hissed in frustration. For days, she had watched the signs appear in the heavens, cross-referencing the omens with the Codex of Alaraxus and the movement of smoke and water. This was the final piece in the puzzle. The Lord of Fire would rise again in the City of Illusions, and only three could return him to his prison: the child of storms, the shaper of steel, and the hand of the Keeper. Tonight she would head to Khorvaire; tomorrow she would begin the search for her soldiers of destiny.

The most ancient legend is the tale of the three progenitor dragons: Khyber, Eberron, and Siberys. Some say that Khyber slew Siberys, only to be bound by Eberron; the three dragons became the world (Eberron), the darkness within (Khyber), and the ring in the sky (Siberys).

Most people are familiar with this legend; most religions commonly accept it, with other deities and powers rising in the age that followed. But few tales explain the reason behind the legend. Some scholars say that Khyber and Siberys learned of a secret tied to the fate of the universe itself, and that they fought to control this power.

No human knows the truth of this legend. But the dragons of Argonnessen are far older than humanity. They are the true children of Siberys, and they have devoted tens of thousands of years to studying the ancient mystery -- the Draconic Prophecy.

While the Prophecy illuminates the future, it rarely presents a single path. Take the example at the beginning of this article. After considering various signs, the sage Tielanthraxa concludes that "The Lord of Fire will rise again in the Demon Wastes, and only three can return him to his prison." Only three people can defeat the demon described in this piece of the Prophecy. However, the Prophecy doesn't say whether they SHOULD defeat the demon -- only that they can. Most dragon scholars collect this knowledge but do not act upon it; the elders believe that the purpose of the draconic race is to chronicle the Prophecy. The younger dragons of the Chamber wish to shape the future, but they don't always agree on the path it should take. As a result, one faction within the Chamber may try to guide the three destined warriors in the defeat of the demon. Another may work to handicap the three; these wyrms have unearthed a different passage in the Prophecy that ties to the demon, and the dragons want the fiend to remain free until this prediction has come to pass. Neither faction cares about the demon, or for that matter the warriors; the main questions are who controls the future and whose interpretation will become fact.

This allows the DM some latitude when using the Prophecy to drive a storyline. According to the Prophecy, the player characters are the only people who can defeat this rakshasa rajah. But this particular example doesn't say exactly how or when they will defeat it. This sets the wheels of adventure in motion -- but leaves room for interpretation and failure. If the party fails in their first attempt, they'll simply have to try to come up with a new approach. Perhaps they can't beat it alone -- but they can play a key role in uniting the Church of the Silver

Flame and the paladins of Dol Arrah against this common foe. The DM must decide how detailed the relevant section of the Prophecy is -- which in turn determines how creative the party can be while still fulfilling the needs of destiny.

Pieces of the Prophecy

No character -- or Dungeon Master -- will ever find a complete text of the Draconic Prophecy. Through interaction with the Serens and dragons themselves, sages have learned that the dragons do have dragonshard texts recording pieces of the Prophecy, the most notable of which are the *Codex of Alaraxus* and the *Talash Siberys*. However, to a large degree, these are accounts of events that have already come to pass or incomplete fragments that are useless on their own. The keys to completing these fragments are written on the world. The Prophecy unfolds in the sky -- in the movement of stars and shards. It reveals itself in the depths, when strange markings are found on the walls of chambers untouched by any living creature. And these are simply the most obvious signs. A dragon sage may draw inspiration from the whispering wind, the patterns of an avalanche, or the shifting sands of a desert. The level of complexity is almost unfathomable to the human mind, and even for a wise and cunning dragon it takes centuries to learn to read these signs.

Over the past three thousand years, the Prophecy has found a new canvas: the inhabitants of Khorvair. The dragonmarks resemble the designs that previously appeared only in bones of the world: on cavern walls and ocean reefs. Dragon sages have devoted millennia to determining the meaning of these manifestations. Some believe that each house has a role to play in the Prophecy, while others see each dragonmarked individual as representing a specific variable. A member of the Chamber who is attempting to enact a particular passage of the Prophecy may feel that a reference to "Storm" requires the involvement of all House Lyrandar, any member of House Lyrandar, or to a particular heir of the house, whom he has identified as the "Child of Storms."

Player characters may encounter pieces of the Prophecy in a variety of forms.

Translated Text: The party receives an intact (though undoubtedly cryptic) section of the Prophecy. A member of the Chamber may relate a specific passage to the party to justify her actions. A character could intercept a scroll being transported by a Seren courier -- who might be killed by Aereni spies, agents of the Lords of Dust, or even opposing members of the Chamber. In this situation, interpretation of the Prophecy could be critical to survival.

Landmarks: Before the first dragonmarks ever appeared on living beings, they appeared on the land itself. A mark could be carved into a cavern wall, a coral pattern shaped as a mark could form on the ocean floor, or the path of a twisting river could form a mark. These marks appear only at certain times and become visible only under the light of a certain conjunction of moons; a mark might even appear in a lava flow that lasts for only a few hours.

These landmarks are complex patterns that resemble the dragonmarks found on living creatures. Interpreting the general meaning of such a mark requires knowledge of Draconic and a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check. However, the deeper meaning can be understood only when it is placed in context with the geographic location of the mark, its relationship to the moons and the Ring of Siberys, and the lore collected by the seers of Argonnessen over the course of eons. When an adventure involves a landmark, the goal is rarely to translate it. Instead, the challenge will be finding the mark, duplicating it or moving it, and quite possibly destroying it before it can fall into enemy hands.

Living Prophecy: While any player character may have a role to play in the Prophecy, characters with

dragonmarks are integrally tied to it. By simply moving around the world, a dragonmarked character is serving as a living parchment. Whenever he meets another dragonmarked character, that interaction may have oracular significance. As a result, the Chamber could stage elaborate scenarios just to get two dragonmarked characters in a particular location at the same time. This is especially relevant if the party has a recurring villain or rival with a dragonmark -- perhaps an unknown destiny links hero and villain together.

False Prophecy: The Lords of Dust despise the dragons of Argonnessen, and they have had tens of thousands of years to scheme. A cunning fiend may create a false passage of the Prophecy. While an elder wyrm might see through the deception, a naïve younger member of the Chamber could be led astray, and a party of adventurers could be caught up in this treachery.

The Shapers

Many scholars have heard of the Draconic Prophecy, but many believe it of interest only to the dragons -- that only the seers of Argonnessen can decipher its many twists and turns. In fact, a number of different groups are watching the Prophecy, and any of these could be the driving force behind an adventure.

The Chamber: These dragons are the most active agents of prophecy. The members of the Chamber are determined to bring the events of the Prophecy to fruition -- even if this takes eons to accomplish. However, different factions within the Chamber may support different interpretations of a given section -- and a party of adventurers could be caught between these warring wyrms. Likewise, the Chamber has little regard for human life: Members of the common races are simply tools that the dragons are required to use. As a result, a Chamber patron may assist the party one day and send them into a death trap the next.

The Chamber has emerged only recently. Few of its members are over 600 years old, and most are considerably younger. Bronze, silver, and gold dragons are the most common agents, since the alternate form power allows these dragons to move among humans unseen, but other dragons can use *polymorph* to accomplish the same effect. The Chamber also operates through Seren agents or employs members of other races -- so not every Chamber operative will turn out to be a dragon.

The Elder Wyrms of Argonnessen: As a rule, the great wyrms of Argonnessen believe that dragons should record the outcome of the Prophecy. They willingly let the children of the Chamber push the future in one direction or another -- but if they feel that any force is truly placing the outcome of the Prophecy in jeopardy, they act decisively and with terrible force. While the elders may act directly, they also make use of Seren agents and observers.

The Undying Court: The deathless elves of the Undying Court are among the only beings old enough and wise enough to decipher the Draconic Prophecy. What remains unclear is whether the elves wish to use the Prophecy for their own ends -- or to destroy it to cripple the destiny of the dragons. This is thought to be the cause of the perennial conflicts between the dragons and Aerenal.

The Lords of Dust: These immortal fiends are the oldest beings on Khorvaire. The ancient dragons defeated the rakshasa rajahs, and the remaining Lords of Dust enjoy nothing more than interfering with the descendants of their enemies.

Independents: Flamewind the sphinx (*Sharn: City of Towers*, page 72) and Sora Teraza (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 166) may reveal pieces of the Draconic Prophecy to party members, setting them on a particular path. Powerful wizards like Mordain the Fleshweaver (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 167) or Erandis

d'Vol(*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 186) could uncover specific fragments of the Prophecy relating to their plans. In particular, Vol could be working with rogue elements of the Chamber in her quest to restore the Mark of Death.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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